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AUTHOR	Stefonek, Tom; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This special double issue focuses on the issue of alternative assessment and its place in educational reform. "Alternative Assessment: A National Perspective" (T. Stefonek) emphasizes that the fundamental purposes of new assessment methods are grounded in educational goals, meaningful outcomes, and curricular and instructional programs promoting life-long student learning, rather than in the measurement process. An emerging question is whether complex, realistic, and time-consuming measures can be used in traditional ways to evaluate all students on a statewide basis. Authentic assessment will be truly authentic when it has progressed to the point where outcomes, curriculum, instruction, and student evaluation are integrated to meet society's educational needs and provide evaluation information. Next, the section, "Regional Actions and Agendas," presents a summary of state assessment initiatives. A Guest Commentary, "The Golden Age of Assessment" (E. Roeber), a review of new forms of assessment is presented along with two other commentaries: (1) "Assessment: More than a Tool--A Driving Force in Educational Reform" (N. Fulford), a discussion of educational changes that must accompany alternative assessment; and (2) "An Opportunity for Interactive Teaming" (E. Rose), a discussion of ways to further the collaboration and school inclusion movements of the 1980s. (SLD)

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Alternative Assessment

A National Perspective

by Tom Stefonek, *Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction*

According to many people, "alternative assessment" refers to virtually any form of evaluation other than traditional paper and pencil, machine-scored, or multiple-choice tests. These new methods, often labeled "performance" assessments, incorporate characteristics intended to provide more valid information on student performance in relation to important knowledge and skills. During the past few years, a number of experts have described their views regarding the essential characteristics of these newer assessment methodologies. As the following statements indicate, there is substantial agreement among their descriptions.

Allen Collins, Principal Scientist at BBN Laboratories in Cambridge, Massachusetts, maintains that new assessment methods should emphasize learning and thinking, especially higher-order thinking skills such as problem-solving strategies, self-regulatory strategies, and learning strategies. In addition, he believes the tests should require students to generate their own answers; serve a variety of purposes such as student motivation, diagnosis, placement, reporting, and evaluation; and be valid with respect to their purposes.

Grant Wiggins, Director of Research for Consultants on Learning, Assessment, and School Structure (CLASS), advocates authentic assessments that involve meaningful tasks at which students should learn to excel. He contends that these tests should simulate the challenges facing adults or workers; must consist of challenges that require knowledge in use and good judgment; focus on students' ability to produce a quality product or performance; involve de-mystified tasks and standards; and create a new type of positive interaction between the assessor and assessee.

Fred Newmann, Director of the National Center on Effective Secondary Schools, argues, "To avoid continued testing of meaningless performances, we need a clearer conception of authentic academic achievement. By examining differences between trivial school tasks (e.g., giving definitions of biological terms) and more meaningful performance in non-school settings (e.g., completing a field survey of wildlife), we can develop criteria for authentic academic achievement." Like many others, Newmann asserts that authentic cognitive work involves disciplined inquiry that integrates and produces knowledge, rather than *re*produces fragments of information others have discovered.

As various descriptions of authentic assessment are considered, it is apparent that the fundamental purposes of these new methods are grounded not in the measurement process, but in educational goals, meaningful outcomes, and curricular and instructional programs designed to promote lifelong student achievement and learning.

Whether or not one accepts all the negative evidence regarding the performance of American students and the "death of the public schools," there is widespread agreement that American students must learn more and must be able to apply knowledge to challenging, real-world problems and situations in creative, cooperative ways. One of the greatest contributions of authentic assessment is the emphasis it places on carefully considered educational goals and valued, meaningful outcomes measured in ways which reflect genuine life and work situations.

One of the continuing challenges of alternative assessment is the development of methods of assessment which are direct measures of the knowledge and skills which students are intended to

Policy Briefs are reports on the status of current issues in education from a national perspective, descriptions of actions and agendas in the NCREL region, commentaries by experts from their particular point of view, and resources for further information.

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possess and to demonstrate. It is apparent that many possibilities exist, including portfolios of student work; student profiles developed by staff over time; production of science, art, electronic media, and other products; student demonstrations of speaking, dance, athletics, music, and other skills; individual and team research projects; applied scientific experiments and projects; and field surveys and community involvement activities.

Many district and state initiatives are based on new assessment methods and an expanded concept of the integral relationship among curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Student writing samples, one of the earlier forms of performance assessment, has been common in states and districts for many years. In the 1980s new forms of reading assessment utilizing longer and more complex passages and requiring increased inferential reasoning skills were initiated in states such as Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

Among more recent efforts are Vermont's writing and mathematics assessments which include student portfolios, a "best piece" of work for students, and a uniform test. This system, like many of its type, is heavily dependent upon district staff participation and requires extensive staff development work as an integral part of the process.

Other examples include New York's every-pupil, "hands on" science assessment; California's student-generated responses to open-ended test items in several subject areas; and Maryland's major assessment initiative in language arts and mathematics in 1991 and proposed new assessments in science and social studies in 1992. Maryland's reading, writing, language usage, and mathematics testing time is approximately nine hours per student, reflecting the greater care, more complex content and methodology, and increased importance of the new forms of student evaluation. Connecticut's work in the area of performance assessments in science, mathematics and other content areas has been cited as innovative assessment in a low-stakes setting, while Kentucky's major new educational reform movement is heavily dependent upon approximately 70 valued outcomes reflecting six learning goals framed in measurable terms.

One emerging question is whether complex, realistic, and time consuming measures can be used in traditional ways to evaluate all students on a statewide basis. While promising developmental work has been accomplished in many states, numerous issues have yet to be resolved, including validity and reliability of assessment methods; student, school, and district comparisons; high-stakes decisions affecting the lives of students; required physical equipment; scoring procedures; and staff development.

Robert L. Linn, University of Colorado at Boulder, has pointed out that in order to reach current high expectations, performance assessment must meet expanded criteria for evaluating student performance systems (i.e., assessment developers and users must be cognizant of both intended and unintended consequences); they must understand the degree of generalizability and transfer possible to performance on related tasks; and must include the element of fairness in relation to the amount and types of assessment problems used and the resultant high-stakes decisions which may seriously affect students' lives (1990).

"Authentic assessment" will become truly authentic when it has progressed to the point where outcomes, curriculum, instruction, and student evaluation are integrated into a total system which meets both the educational needs of our society and provides the evaluative information required to maintain fuller confidence and political support.

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Timely information regarding state programs in this rapidly changing environment can be obtained from the newly formed "Student Assessment Exchange." Contact Edward Roeber, Council of Chief State School Officers, 379 Hall of the State, 400 North Capitol Street, Washington, DC 20001-1511; telephone (202) 624-7700.

Tom Stefonek is Director of the Bureau for Education Statistics and Testing, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Madison, Wisconsin.

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Regional Actions & Agendas

Illinois

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) administers statewide process assessment in the areas of writing and reading to all third-, sixth-, eighth-, and eleventh-grade students. The reading assessment makes use of full-length passages drawn from the texts teachers use for instruction. Questions accompanying the texts are multiple-choice items which may have one, two, or three correct answers. In addition, ISBE is considering the use of open-ended items in a "writing-in-response-to-reading" format. The earliest these considerations would be acted on in the form of a statewide pilot assessment would be 1993.

This summer, ISBE co-sponsored a training session for 100 Education Service Center (ESC) staff and consultants. The purpose of this program was to train ESC staff to empower school personnel to evaluate and restructure their assessment programs. Trainers encouraged the use of performance/process assessment methods as part of Districtwide Assessment Systems. The training program was based in part on the Assessment Videotape Series developed by Rick Stiggins at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Training modules have been developed to accompany the program.

■ Legislation

There are no legislative efforts which focus on the implementation of alternative assessment. However, two pieces of legislation passed in 1991 do impact state and local assessment. The first mandated the return of individual scores as part of the current statewide assessment program. The second put into effect a new "outcomes-based" accreditation system which focuses on student achievement. Legislators also discussed the introduction of legislation which would reassign grade levels for statewide assessment. This legislation would move some of the burden of the mandated five hours of assessment from grades three, six, eight, and eleven and place it at other grade levels.

■ Future

Illinois' future plans for implementing alternative assessment programs include a variety of activities:

- A group of reading researchers from across the country met in late October to develop a proposed assessment blueprint. Following this planning meeting, three group representatives met with twelve reading specialists and educators from Illinois to review and possibly revise the preliminary blueprint for an alternative, large-scale reading assessment.
- Educational Service Center staff who attended the summer workshops will pilot programs in at least one district in their region using the training module provided at the workshops.
- A committee will be appointed to investigate the issue of distributing statewide assessment across grade levels. Possible solutions which will allow for the reliable assessment of all fundamental learning areas within the mandated five-hour time limit will be evaluated and the results shared with Superintendent Leininger.

Indiana

All future student assessment in the state of Indiana will be based on "essential" knowledge and skills (e.g. what students must know and be able to do). Major stakeholder groups have been involved in identifying these skills over the past year in such areas as mathematics, language arts, social studies, and science. Plans are also in place to identify life and employability skills to complete the list. Some of these skills will require alternative forms of assessment. The skills to be assessed will determine the form of assessment to be used.

■ Legislation

There is no mandate in law that requires the state to conduct performance assessment. Subject areas to be tested, and the design of the tests, are determined by the State Board of Education.

■ Future

Three efforts to include performance assessment as part of a comprehensive state and local assessment program are underway.

- Indiana's writing sample is being revised in several ways. A plan is in place to change the existing timed prompt to a process writing approach which will occur over a three-day period. The same prompt will be given to all grade levels tested, and initial work has begun on the development of a K-12 (and beyond) developmental writing scale to be used across grade levels. The next two years will involve pilot testing.
- During the spring of 1991, the Department, in conjunction with CTB/McGraw-Hill, conducted a pilot of four forms of eighth-grade, open-ended, mathematics problem-solving exam. Results were encouraging and state educators plan to expand the exam to two additional grade levels (grades 4 and 10) over the next two years.
- A statewide inservice effort is under way to improve teachers' skills in conducting classroom assessment, including performance assessment. This program is adapted from Richard Stiggins' work at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

■ Resources

For information concerning the writing assessment, contact Sheila Ewing, (317) 232-9057. For information concerning the mathematics pilot, contact Donna Long, (317) 232-9057. For information concerning the Classroom Assessment Workshops, contact Robert Fallon, (317) 232-9144.

Iowa

The Iowa Department of Education has formed a partnership with 15 other states and six metropolitan school districts in the New Standards Project, funded by the MacArthur Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trusts. The goal of the project

is to create an examination system that prepares students for the challenges of the 21st century. The project received $2.5 million for the first 18 months which runs through June 1992.

Several local school administrators also are supporting alternative assessment measures by encouraging teachers to incorporate student portfolios, writing samples, records of student participation in school and community activities, results from standardized tests, and their own classroom tests into their assessment programs.

■ Legislation

The Iowa Legislature has appointed an Educational Reform Committee which includes legislators and lay citizens to study alternative assessment and other educational issues.

Michigan

Performance assessment has been a part of many of the assessment activities in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) over its more than 20-year history, beginning with science performance assessment in 1974. Currently, in the area of mathematics, alternative forms of assessment are being developed and piloted. For example, the fall 1991 version of the MEAP Essential Skills Mathematics Test included a constructive response item.

Alternative assessments are also being used to measure reading performance. A Classroom Assessment Packet has been developed by MEAP and the Instructional Specialist Program (ISP) with the assistance of the Michigan Reading Association. It introduces alternative ways of assessing a student's reading performance in the classroom setting. Constructive response also is being developed as part of the Essential Skills Reading Test.

■ Legislation

There is no legislation regarding alternative assessment measures at this time.

■ Future

In addition to reading and mathematics, alternative assessments are being developed for use in the areas of employability skills and science. As the concept of the workplace broadens and as student and adult demographics for Michigan and the nation change, MEAP staff are working to develop what is known as the Employability Skills Portfolio. In this personalized system of external and self-assessment, students must "discover," "document," and "develop" their employability skills. The portfolio is one tool to assist students in integrating and recording their educational experiences.

In the area of science, MEAP staff are developing assessment modules that will include multiple-choice, constructive response, and performance assessment items. These materials are being developed through a collaborative venture with Illinois and California.

Minnesota

The Minnesota Department of Education has committed itself to supporting and facilitating education that is outcomes-based. This commitment translates to providing collaborative training throughout the state which emphasizes curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices that facilitate the goals and philosophy of outcomes-based education.

The Statewide Assessment Program, which has been in use over the last three testing cycles (12 years), collects writing samples over a three-day period to model exemplary writing process. The samples are scored at the state level, using trained, local district personnel. All districts are required to use this assessment for local program evaluation.

A statewide performance assessment in science was conducted at three grade levels during the spring of 1991. The assessment involved students in a variety of lab skills such as measuring, weighing, observing, and reporting. Additional statewide assessments, which will include a performance component, are planned for 1992 in visual arts and social studies. Statewide performance assessments in mathematics and music may be conducted in 1993 as part of an integrated curriculum.

■ Legislation

Minnesota legislation requires districts to assess students using alternative, standardized, and/or state tests. Each district must participate in statewide testing every three years.

■ Future

A proposed Graduation Rule based on demonstrated performance across an array of outcomes is being considered as an alternative to the current system based on Carnegie units. Sixty-five "competencies" have been identified and spread across seven "outcomes." Documented performance assessment would be used to measure student demonstrations of proficiency against standards. Twenty-eight public information meetings concerning the Graduation Rule are scheduled for this fall, and given favorable response, the proposal will enter the legal rule-making process in 1992. In anticipation of the Graduation Rule, proficiency levels have been identified for each of the competencies, and model assessments are under development.

■ Resources

The state maintains an electronic bank of traditional and non-traditional assessment and evaluation tools, techniques, and support materials called MIDEBANK. While the bank's traditional "holdings" are refined and improved continually, new development is almost exclusively in the areas of alternative assessment, including performance items, scoring guides, and other support materials for assessment and program evaluation. A music CD has been developed for use with the MIDEBANK disc.

In addition to MIDEBANK, videotapes on writing scoring and science performance are available. An assessment and program evaluation manual is being completed, as well as an administration manual that will be available in the fall.

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Ohio

In 1983, Ohio school districts were required to begin implementing competency-based education programs in reading, English composition, and mathematics. Program components include appropriate assessment and intervention according to student need. A wide variety of assessment techniques, including performance assessment, provide information useful for one of the following purposes: instructional and/or intervention decisions; student/program evaluation; promotion/retention decisions; and guidance-related decisions. Full implementation was required by 1989-90.

Eight school districts serve as state-funded demonstration sites for the "Classroom of the Future" project. Among the many project objectives is the expectation that curriculum-based performance assessment will provide continual feedback necessary to maximize learning for each student.

As one of the requirements for graduation in 1993-94, students must pass the Ninth-Grade Proficiency Tests in four areas. For the writing exam, students must produce two writing samples in response to state-developed prompts. In addition to selecting prompts, Ohio educators help to develop the holistic scale and select range finder papers used in scoring the writing.

■ Legislation

In response to a recommendation by the State Board of Education, the General Assembly is expected to add science as a fifth area of the Ohio Ninth-Grade Proficiency Tests. At a minimum, the first science test will include "enhanced" multiple choice type questions.

Some members of the General Assembly are studying the feasibility of repealing current legislation that requires the use of standardized achievement and ability tests at four grade levels, and possibly replacing these tests in one or more grades with criterion-referenced (proficiency) tests in reading, writing, mathematics, citizenship, and science.

■ Future

The Ohio Department of Education has identified the following activities as next steps:

- Collaborate with 49 teacher education institutions to improve the preservice and inservice opportunities for prospective and practicing teachers to gain increased skill in classroom performance assessment;
- Complete state models for competency-based education programs—including assessment methods—in English/language arts, science, and social studies (the model for mathematics has been disseminated already); and
- Continue to collaborate with leaders of the Education Coalition organizations and key members of the General Assembly to construct a total assessment system that supports improved classroom assessment, including use of many techniques, permits meaningful aggregates of those assessments at the building and district levels, and provides state accountability and national benchmark data necessary to inform state and local policymakers and diverse groups of stakeholders

■ Resources

For information regarding "Classroom of the Future" or Competency-Based Education "Model Programs," contact Nancy A. Eberhart, Director, Division of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development, Ohio Department of Education.

For information regarding collaborative efforts with Ohio teacher education institutions, contact Jerry L. Klenke, Director, Division of Teacher Education and Certification, Ohio Department of Education.

For more information regarding current statewide student testing programs and/or possible changes in those programs, contact E. Roger Trent, Director, Division of Educational Services, Ohio Department of Education.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin has had Competency-Based Testing (CBT) for many years. This year, Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has included funding for the development of a tenth-grade "Gateway Assessment" in their budgets for fiscal years 1991 and 1992. They plan to incorporate alternative assessment methodologies into this assessment to the fullest extent possible.

■ Legislation

State educators are pursuing legislation to reactivate the performance-based "Intermediate Milestone Exams" into the statewide education program.

■ Future

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction plans to develop purposes and general specifications for the Gateway Assessment through a consensus building process. All educators in the state will be involved in identifying common goals and building understanding and agreement on the procedures, purposes, and outcomes of assessment. These plans also will include education and staff development.

■ Resources

The Wisconsin DPI's budget for fiscal year 1992 includes provisions for one full-time equivalency position plus $75,000. The fiscal year 1993 budget provides for the same position plus $125,000. These monies will be used in combination with other resources to look at developmental possibilities.

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Guest Commentary

The Golden Age of Assessment

by Edward Roeber, *Council of Chief State School Officers*

It certainly is an interesting time to be working in student assessment! Never has so much interest been shown both in more frequent and varied forms of student assessment. New program ideas abound and student assessment suddenly has been discovered in Washington, DC, and across the country. If student assessment isn't the solution to what ails our country and our educational system, then certainly it must be the villain! In fact, it may be both problem **and** solution since new forms of assessment are needed to change what and how students are taught. The "S-word" in Washington, DC—standards—encompasses all of this and more.

New forms of assessment are under development in many states, local school districts, colleges, universities, research centers, and organizations. Under the name of authentic, alternative, or performance assessment, or a variety of other names, many groups and individuals are trying to define different and/or higher levels of expectations for students, as well as to devise better ways of measuring student performance. Existing assessment programs—ranging from local school district or statewide programs to national assessment programs such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—are setting higher levels of expectations and trying new methods of assessment.

One of the best illustrations of this movement is the aptly named New Standards Project, a program to set higher, more meaningful standards for students and to measure these standards in more authentic ways. This project, co-sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh's Learning Research and Development Center and the National Center for Education and the Economy, began with a calibration exercise in the area of writing. The exercise, involving participants from ten states, demonstrated that different states' writing prompts can be calibrated to other states' standards. In addition, 22 states and local districts met during the summer of 1991 to begin generating the student performance tasks, projects, and portfolios which will be used to define student outcome standards. The 450 teachers and curriculum specialists that participated made an excellent start in this definition.

At the same time, a variety of "new" assessment procedures are being developed and tried. In fact, it is surprising to see the range and number of trial efforts under way across the country:

- Large-scale assessment programs are being developed and implemented using open-ended or extended response exercises.
- Individually administered exercises are being given to all students at one or more grade levels in statewide assessment programs.
- Portfolios, once strictly the domain of classroom teachers, are being considered on an every-pupil basis in several states. Interestingly, they are not being considered just for writing, but for mathematics, reading, science, and workplace readiness, as well.
- A variety of extended tasks, to be carried out by individuals or groups of students, some over several hours, days, weeks or months, are being developed in areas such as mathematics, reading, science, and social studies.
- Performance assessment in the arts, science, and other areas are once again under serious consideration.

All of this activity is one major reason why the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) recently established the Student Assessment Exchange to facilitate and coordinate the work in innovative assessment in a variety of subject areas. CCSSO received funding for the project from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) and a subcontract to the UCLA Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST).

With the many new programs under development, opportunities to work collaboratively proliferate. The Council hopes to encourage different groups and individuals to openly share ideas and information, and through this, to work together to develop assessment resources which all can share and use.

It is **truly** a marvelous time to be working in student assessment! Old ideas and assumptions are being challenged, both from a curricular and a technical standpoint, all at a time when the learning needs of students have not been higher. The task before us as educators is to help assure that our students learn much more of what they need to be successful and competitive on the job; our task as assessment specialists is to help develop the methods and materials for assessment which will support the quality instruction our students should receive. To succeed, we must remain open to new methods of assessing students and not be so "wedded" to old techniques. If ever there was a golden age of assessment, it is now!

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Edward Roeber is Director of Student Assessment Programs, Council of Chief State School Officers. He can be contacted at 379 Hall of the State, 400 North Capitol Street, Washington, DC 20001, or at (202) 624-7700.

Commentary

Assessment: More Than a Tool—A Driving Force in Educational Reform

by Nancy Fulford, *NCREL*

As we explore alternatives to standardized testing and uses for these alternatives, we also create a need for changes in such areas as teacher training and education, school administration, and parent involvement. Some of these changes include the following:

- Colleges and universities must develop new, more appropriate courses in assessment and its effective utilization.
- A variety of educational agencies must provide ongoing assistance and inservice training for teachers on alternative forms of assessment and their uses.
- Administrators must be trained to implement new procedures and utilize data collected from alternative assessment methods.
- New methods of assessment must coordinate with school goals, standards, and curriculum.
- Schools must provide flexible scheduling to allow for the extra time required to conduct and interpret new "tests."
- Educators must examine questions of fairness and equity as they relate to alternative methods of assessment.
- Parents and students must be made aware of the appropriate use and interpretation of data collected from various forms of assessment.

Teacher Education. In the past, few teacher training programs spent adequate time promoting teacher awareness of test administration and interpretation of standardized tests. With the appearance of multiple and varied assessment measures and the increasing emphasis on school accountability, these teacher education programs now must devote more time and effort to new assessment measures. Assessment *courses* must be developed which reflect changes in instruction, the increasing variety of assessment procedures, as well as current research on both instruction and assessment. These courses should address such questions as the use of technology in assessment, including computers, computer networks, and video techniques.

Inservice Training and Assistance. Regional educational service centers and staff development centers, state educational agency staff, and coordinators of staff development in local school districts need to provide assistance, practice, and ongoing staff development for teachers as they learn new instructional and assessment methods. The same assistance will be needed as schools begin to develop and administer their own tests. Consequently, such groups must be familiar with the wide range of assessment methods and the most current research in the field. Regional Educational Laboratories should be one important resource for such information.

Administration. Not only must administrators know the correct procedures for conducting assessment, they also must understand the proper use and reporting of varied types of assessments. Only with this knowledge can instruction and assessment be improved. As a school leader, the administrator must set the tone for his/her staff to utilize the information appropriately. He/she also needs to encourage the staff to try new multiple measures, realizing that change is not easy and that mistakes may be made at first.

Restructuring. Assessment must be consistent with the overall school mission and individual goals as developed by the school planning *team* during a restructuring effort. This is to say that once the school has a vision and plan for school improvement, standards, curriculum, instructional content, and assessment methods must all be in alignment and acceptable to the "community" as a whole.

Classroom Adjustments. Alternative assessment methods may require additional time to conduct and interpret. Therefore adjustments in actual schedules, as well as expectations, need to be built into the assessment plan. Such assessments require more interaction between the student(s) and the assessor. Such methods also must be repeated at more frequent intervals or be ongoing as part of a truly developmental learning process for both the student(s) and the teacher. As part of this process, students must understand the purpose and the interpretation of the results. If used appropriately, assessment can be incorporated into classroom instruction rather than remain an isolated activity. Thus, such assessment can be more natural and less frightening to students.

Equity and Fairness. As with all tests, issues of equity and fairness must be addressed. Standardized tests have always been criticized for their unfair comparisons and their use for labeling and tracking students. Alternative assessments could compare one student's performance and progress over time. These "tests" could accommodate for individual differences with their flexible design and multiple, instead of single checks. Unlike standardized tests, they can account for students' different learning styles and skills, and can measure students' ability to reason and problem-solve in authentic situations. While alternative assessments hold the *possibility* of more equitable student measurement, criteria for equity needs to be established early on, especially for the growing diversity of students in our schools.

Awareness. Finally, it is important that school staff make parents and students aware of the appropriate use and interpretation of the assessment data. This task is often more difficult than expected, and must be repeated at regular intervals to ensure that students do not face problems at home or in school. Information about assessment methods and how to interpret their results should be available in all languages used by students and their parents. Such reporting should stress the variety of types of information and its richness, rather than try to over-simplify information about students or school programs.

As necessary as exploring alternative forms of assessment is to the fundamental goal of restructuring our schools and educational system, it must not be taken lightly nor conducted without an integrated, overall school plan. In fact, alternative assessment measures may become the catalysts for broader educational reform. ■

Nancy Fulford is a Program Associate at NCREL. She is the editor of Policy Briefs *and* Policy Proceedings. *She is also responsible for conducting policy seminars in each of the NCREL states and works with the Regional Policy Information Center (RPIC) at NCREL.*

NWREL Classroom Assessment Training

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) Classroom Assessment Training Program is the product of a decade of research on the task demands of day-to-day classroom assessment. Through extensive studies conducted in classrooms, NWREL researchers determined the specific assessment training needs of teachers and developed a 10-workshop professional development program to address those needs. Each workshop presents practical ideas in everyday language that can make the assessment process faster, easier, and better—in that order. These three-day institutes help participants learn to present these workshops.

Institute Goals

- Make participants aware of the critical role high-quality classroom assessment plays in determining the quality of instruction
- Train participants to present classroom assessment workshops for teachers and administrators using the NWREL video training program

Qualification of Participants

- Successful experience as a classroom teacher
- Skill and experience as a trainer of adults
- Willingness to risk a venture in a new domain

NOTE: No prior training or experience with assessment is required.

Schedule of Institutes

- January 13 - 15, 1992 at the Shilo Inn, Portland, OR
- April 1 - 3, 1992 at Howard Johnson Plaza, Lake Oswego, OR

Registration Information

- Enrollment is limited to first 50 registrants
- $200 registration fee (refundable with 7-day prior notification; does not include video training materials) is due and payable AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION by check (payable to NWREL) or purchase order

Contact

NWREL Center for Classroom Assessment
101 S.W. Main Street
Portland, OR 97204
(800) 547-6339 x 630
(in Portland, call 275-9630)

Commentary

An Opportunity for Interactive Teaming

by Ernest Rose, *NCREL*

During the past decade, a serious attempt has been made to foster interactive teaming between general and special educators in school buildings across the country (Friend, 1984; Morsink, Thomas, & Correa, 1991). This activity has focused on reintroducing students with disabilities into regular classrooms and promoting their successful participation in these settings. Specifically, classroom teachers and their special education colleagues work together to adapt curriculum materials and instruction, and to determine alternative methods for students to demonstrate what they have learned—alternative assessment!

In this issue of *Policy Briefs*, Stefonek, Roeber, and Fulford have identified some important characteristics of alternative assessment. These characteristics include (a) a relationship to educational goals, (b) a relationship to curriculum and instruction, (c) a relationship to generalizable performances in the community and the workplace, (d) a selection of meaningful tasks, (e) positive interaction between the assessor and assessee, (f) continuous measurement, and (g) accommodation for individual differences.

Over the past 20 years, these aspects of assessment have received considerable attention in the fields of special education and applied behavior analysis, and can serve as part of the foundation for interactive teaming between special and regular educators. For example, certification requirements in many states typically specify that special educators complete two or three courses in testing, measurement, and assessment. While a good deal of the coursework may emphasize norm-referenced standardized testing, particularly for disability diagnosis, prospective teachers also practice developing and using alternative assessment procedures that are individualized, continuous, and functional. A specific example is to give children who are slow readers the alternative of retelling a story in their own words as a test of reading comprehension. This replaces a traditional multiple-choice or fill-in-the blank test. Additionally, recording students' stories on audiocassettes creates a product for their academic portfolios.

Another example, from vocational education, is to assess student performance of a specific job task (making a bed) or a job in its entirety (cleaning a hotel room). This very functional form of assessment replaces a less relevant test of writing down the steps for making a bed or cleaning a hotel room. It is more motivating for students and allows teachers to imbed continuous assessment in the instructional process.

As states in the Midwest and elsewhere become more interested and committed to alternative assessment, the opportunity for expanded collaboration among regular and special education teachers is especially strong. Here are some suggestions for taking advantage of that opportunity.

Teacher Education. State Education Agencies and Colleges of Education

Regional Classroom Assessment Training Program

The State Education Agencies of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin and the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory are developing a proposal to create a regional classroom assessment training program for teachers and preservice education majors. The proposal considers the national, regional, and state demands for assessment literacy and training in alternative assessment strategies for teachers at elementary, middle, and high school levels.

One major focus of the project includes the design and development of Strategic Teaching Frameworks (STF) for assessment training. STF is a hypermedia system designed by Beau Jones (NCREL) and Tom Duffy (Indiana University) to aid teachers in adopting new classroom strategies based on cognitive science research findings. Hypermedia makes use of computer and laserdisc technologies in an integrated system and allows users to access multiple levels of a program to facilitate their understanding and use.

The State Education Agencies, represented by their Testing and Assessment Directors, and NCREL will seek foundation monies to support the development and dissemination of this project.

For more information on the Regional Classroom Assessment Training Project or Strategic Teaching Frameworks, contact Ernie Rose, NCREL, at 708/571-4700.

could work together to identify a common core of assessment procedures and skills for elementary, secondary, and special education majors. The current separation in preservice programs runs contrary to the notion of interactive teaming once program graduates beginning teaching. Students learning to work together to implement models of assessment will cultivate the habit of working with other teachers in the future.

Staff Development. At the school or district level or both, teams of regular and special education teachers could be formed to identify or develop assessment strategies and pilot them in selected classrooms. Based upon pilot outcomes, these strategies may be kept, modified, or rejected. Assessment procedures that are found to be mutually satisfying then could be shared with all teachers, administrators, and parents in the school or district. This process would heighten the probability of continuing interactive teaming not only to conduct assessment, but in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and classroom management.

Restructuring. In order for real restructuring to take place, all students, their parents, and their teachers must have equal representation and participation. This includes children with disabilities and special needs. It is becoming ever more obvious that parallel education programs (or systems) do not reflect the needs of students and their families, or of society. The move toward alternative assessment procedures provides an impetus for bringing regular and special educators together for a common goal. This, in turn, creates a common ground for integrating students into school and community environments.

Alternative assessment procedures are familiar territory for special education teachers and represent a useful opportunity for them to work with regular educators in an interactive team model. Thus, the current assessment movement should be seen as a chance to further the collaboration and school inclusion movements of the 1980s, and to create a new community for teaching and learning.

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Ernest Rose is Evaluation Coordinator for NCREL. He is responsible for managing evaluation of NCREL's five program areas and external evaluation contracts. He is also the Project Director of Using Student Assessment to Improve Learning *(USAIL).*

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State Contacts

ILLINOIS

Illinois State Board of Education
Student Assessment Section
100 North First Street
Springfield, IL 62777-0001
Eunice Greer
217/782-4823

INDIANA

Indiana Department of Education
Room 229, State House
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2798
Linda Bond
317/232-6610

IOWA

Iowa Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
14th Street and Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50319
Max Morrison
515/281-5294

MICHIGAN

Michigan Department of Education
P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, MI 48909
Peggy Dutcher
517/373-3324

MINNESOTA

Minnesota Department of Education
728 Capitol Square Building
St. Paul, MN 55101
James R. Colwell
612/296-5119

OHIO

Ohio Department of Education
65 South Front Street
Columbus, OH 43266-0308
E. Roger Trent
614/466-3224

WISCONSIN

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
125 South Webster Street
Madison, WI 53707
Tom Stefonek
608/266-1782

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1900 Spring Road, Suite 300
Oak Brook, IL 60521

Telephone: (708) 571-4700
FAX: (708) 571-4716
GTE: ncrel.lab

Jeri Nowakowski, *Executive Director*
Nancy Fulford, *Editor*
Marianne Kroeger, *Production Editor*
Stephanie Merrick, *Production Editor*
Sharon Sherman, *Desktop Publisher*

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